The Effect of Public Service Motivation at Individual, Group, and Organisational Levels of Citizenship Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

This study conceptualizes and empirically investigates how dimensions of public service motivation affect perceived citizenship behaviour in the context of government-owned utilities. This study used a large-scale questionnaire survey from four utility sectors in Taiwan (N = 1,087). The emergent model suggests that compassion (COM) and self-sacrifice (SS) affect the perceived effectiveness of individual-level Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Commitment to the Public Interest (CPI) and Attraction to Public Policy making (APP) affect perceived effectiveness of OCB at the group and organisational levels, respectively. The results support the expected contribution of OCB, from the individual to the group levels, and from the group level to the organisational level. Public utility managers should strive to improve employee attitudes and motivation towards greater levels of OCB.

KEYWORDS
Citizenship Behaviour, Motivation, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, Public Service Motivation, Utility Sect

1. INTRODUCTION

The increased importance of public service motivation (PSM) may be partly attributed to the emergence of new public management means of supplementing traditional public administration. For the latest technologies to improve PSM, they must be designed and developed to improve organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) for managing organisational performance (Brewer, 2008; Grant, 2008; Pandey, Wright, & Moynihan, 2008; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). Unfortunately, many organisations do not give much attention to PSM and OCB (Kim, 2006; Steen, 2008), and some even overlook the issue of scale and scaling of OCB (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). Therefore, our objective is to develop a better understanding of PSM and its effect on perceived OCB.

Research on PSM has focused on its positive effects on prosocial behavior, job satisfaction, and organisational performance. Scholars define OCB as prosocial behaviour that goes beyond formal requirements of the job and is beneficial to the organisation (Chang & Smithkrai, 2010). Examples include: assisting colleagues with their tasks, devoting time to assist new entrants to the organisation.

DOI: 10.4018/IRMJ.2020010103

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defending their organisational reputation, or even taking voluntary salary-cut. However, there are different opinions about causes to OCB (Chang, Nguyen, Cheng, Kuo, & Lee, 2016). OCB improved employees’ achievements, led to better scores in performance evaluations, and increased employees’ sense of self-fulfillment and self-efficacy (Oplatka, 2006).

We view OCB as subjective rather than objective (Organ, 1990). This perspective contends that OCB is not independent of human experience; instead, it develops through social creation of meanings and concepts, and therefore loses a universal, objective character (Organ, 1997). The subjective nature of OCB is apparent in Kim’s (2006) view that it resides in the individual, in Organ’s view of OCB as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). However, other views treat OCB as embodied in individuals, groups and organisations (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). The subjective and context-sensitive nature of OCB implies that its categories and meanings depend on individual perception (Organ, 1990; P. M. Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983).

Taiwan has worked hard to promote privatisation since 1989 in accordance with the global trend of liberalisation, and to cope with the current operational difficulties of government-owned enterprises. Privatisation per se has been a great challenge since it deals with a country’s economy, its finance, the utilisation of state property, the mechanism of the equity market and the benefits of some interest groups. To date, the progress of privatisation has lagged somewhat behind the original timetable because of difficulties in its implementation (Cheng, 2015). Generally speaking, all of these reasons for government-owned utility sectors are inherently based on this fundamental principle: government-owned utility sectors are obliged to fulfill multiple public objectives, some of which are explicitly social, although it is possible to vary the objectives of the privatisation programme of one country to another (Kirkpatrick, Nixson, & Cook, 1998). In particular, privatisation policy is involved in the change of ownership from the public sector to private firms. In theory, the ownership of GOEs is in the hand of the citizens. Further, there must be some dissimilarities and different operating goals between the public and private sectors. On the other hand, the real agenda of privatisation is not the difference between the public and private sectors, but the introduction of competition and market disciplines. However, privatisation policy is often expected to result in the ruination of public interest, and that is the major objection from its opponents.

The main features of government-owned utility sectors are as follows: firstly, the technologies have important economies of scale and scope; secondly, most of a utility’s assets are highly specific and non-redeployable in other activities without great costs; thirdly, the services provided are considered necessary goods. Altogether, these three characteristics undercut the capacity of ordinary market mechanisms to deliver the first-best performance (Levy & Spiller, 1996). Understanding PSM not only helps to increase productivity and performance of GOEs, but could also guide employment efforts to identify quality human resources. Therefore, the purposes of government-owned utility sectors are to protect those who are vulnerable, and to defend the legal rights of people according to the governing institutions of a country. Indeed, the government-owned utility sector is a salient component of understanding PSM (Manolopoulos, 2007). It is argued that the utility sector’s institutional values are translated to values of employees through identity formation, and that those behaviours result from institutional logics that dictate appropriate behaviour (Cheng & Chang, 2019; March & Olsen, 1989; Vandenabeele, 2007). For all these reasons, government-owned utility sectors are a noteworthy and interesting part of the public sector (Ahrne, Aspers, & Brunsson, 2015).

Scholars of PSM have argued that public employees have distinct motivational bases that could lead to citizenship behaviour (Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Kim, 2005; Perry, 2000), but these studies have little to say about how individuals, groups, and organisations develop it (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). Thus, we focus on a specific question: how does a person’s PSM influence his or her perceptions of OCB at the individual, group, and organisational levels? Understanding this phenomenon and its unique characteristics expands on existing literature on PSM and OCB, especially
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